

What will it take to heal a war-torn land?

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WHILE THE UNITED STATES AIR Force is still destroying North Vietnam, some agencies of the American Government are quietly studying the problems of reconstructing this mountainous, semi-industrialized, and incredibly tough adversary of the United States.

President Nixon (and President Johnson before him) has committed the United States to this course. Some Americans consider it a matter of conscience.

The Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency have, over the years, accumulated a vast fund of information about North Vietnam, useful originally for knocking the country down, and now for putting it back together again. This information has been kept secret, but now is being drawn upon by Henry A. Kissinger's staff at the White House, and will soon be passed over to Roderick O'Connor, assistant administrator for special projects in the Agency for International Development (AID), who has been tagged for the reconstruction job.

World Bank study

The World Bank has had a committee to study Vietnam reconstruction since 1965. The Soviet Union and Communist China, the most likely sources of technological aid, have plenty of current firsthand information. Japanese industry has shown a keen interest in getting in on the job, and has already had a mission visiting Hanoi.

Top North Vietnamese officials have, however, made it emphatically clear to visitors that they do not intend to let any foreign agency plan or execute their reconstruction. They are a closed group, so jealous of their sovereignty that they would rather forgo foreign aid than permit intrusion.

The representatives of third countries have advised Washington that the North Vietnamese would regard an American contribution as "reparations." What they want is a check direct from the United States, but no AID mission, and no experts or advisers.

Nor do the North Vietnamese have much use for the United Nations, which did nothing for them during the long war; nor for the World Bank, which they consider to be dominated by the United States; nor for the Asian Development Bank, which they consider to be dominated by Japan. They would like to avoid a financial consortium of aid

As peace edges uncertainly nearer in Vietnam, so does the need for massive postwar reconstruction. Even while hamlets, bridges, industries, and whole towns still are being turned into rubble, some officials are grappling with the tasks of rebuilding — of how best to use President Nixon's proffered \$7½ billion for Indo-China (with up to \$2½ billion going to North Vietnam). South Vietnam has great potential for recovery, but needs peace, stability, confidence. The North, battered by strategic bombing, wants 'reparations' with no strings.

givers and to deal with each donor or lender bilaterally.

In any reconstruction plan the questions to be asked must include: How much damage was done? What is the potential for reconstruction?

North Vietnam is a country devastated by a deluge of a half million tons of bombs. Its devastation differs, however, from that of South Vietnam, which has been ravaged by

an even larger tonnage of explosives. Whereas the bombing in South Vietnam has been characterized by tactical support of the American and South Vietnamese armies, and carpet bombing and defoliation in the countryside where North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were presumed to be taking cover, in the North the bombing has been "strategic," aimed especially at industries, power plants, supply dumps, and communication centers which were more often than not in or near towns.

Consequently, not a single city has been spared. Some cities, like Vinh, a communications center on the way to South Vietnam, have been obliterated once, partly reconstructed during the three-year bombing pause after 1968, and then obliterated again. Almost all are one-half or more in ruins. All large bridges, all large oil-storage facilities, and all major electric-power plants have been hit.

North Vietnam is, at present, a society devoid of amenities. The people work mainly with what is shipped in from China (small arms, essential rice, and other food) and from the Soviet Union (heavy weapons and aircraft). It is a country where it is impossible to purchase a paper clip or any but the roughest clothing, where schoolchildren have been taught to wash and dry copy paper so it can be used again.

Yet, incredibly, the North is still a vital

The Bombing

No Answers For Americans

Secrecy and falsehood again mask what the Nixon Administration is doing in Vietnam. Following what appear to have been major blunders in peace dealings with both Hanoi and Saigon, President Nixon has resorted to the heaviest aerial bombardment of North Vietnam since the war began. The North Vietnamese know what is being hit and how. It is the Americans, thanks to Washington's desire to deceive them, who do not know.

James McCartney of The Observer's Washington bureau reports that the administration simply refuses to answer questions about targets, number of planes involved, bomb tonnage, amount of damage and what kinds of bombs are being dropped.

Perhaps that statement should be qualified slightly. A Pentagon spokesman did say: "We don't hit civilian targets." Then, apparently realizing the obviousness of that falsehood, he corrected himself: "We do not target civilian targets." But reliable reports come in telling of bomb destruction of a hospital here, a low-cost housing project there, an embassy here, and on and on. We think it is no less a lie to say that we do not "target civilian targets" when we are dropping great numbers of bombs in civilian areas, even if military targets are nearby. And in fact many bombs are falling in areas far from any conceivable military target.

Meanwhile, more Americans are being shot down, to die or to join other prisoners of war. Our officials in Saigon admit, even as Washington issues denials, that our losses are greater than expected.

One of the most questionable of the administration's explanations was the one used in the original announcement that bombing was being resumed above the 20th parallel. The administration said the bombing is necessary "to cope with a buildup of Communist forces which could lead to another offensive in the south." Yet high Pentagon sources were

saying just before the resumption on Dec. 18 that there was no evidence of new buildups.

Did the bombing ever, as the administration contended, bring the Communists seriously to the peace table? If so, they came to accept terms that we had never regarded as acceptable to us before: the terms of the nine-point draft which Washington and Hanoi agreed to in October. Those terms included a cease-fire in place, leaving large numbers of Communist troops in the south. It is just as logical to argue that the bombing brought us seriously to the peace table as to say it brought Hanoi.

The merits of full-scale bombing in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas were discussed this way in the Pentagon Papers, which the administration was anxious to keep secret:

"Other than Haiphong port, no single target within these areas has any appreciable significance for North Vietnam's ability to supply men and material to the South....

"Accordingly, the only purpose of intensification of the bombing campaign in the north and the addition of further targets would be to break the will of the North Vietnam leaders. Central Intelligence Agency forecasts indicate little if any chance that this would result even from a protracted bombing campaign directed at population centers."

But Mr. Nixon goes on with the delusion. As the Detroit Free Press notes, it appears that "Mr. Nixon has learned nothing from 18 years of U. S. involvement in Vietnam or from the history of Vietnam for the past thousand years."

Congress must move to force common sense upon the White House.